

# THE SABBATH:

## ITS MORAL NATURE AND OBSERVANCE

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### SECTION I.

#### THE SABBATH NOT CEREMONIAL.

It is disputed whether the weekly Sabbath is an essential part of what is generally called the Moral Law, which the Holy Ghost declares to be "spiritual—holy, and just, and good;" or whether it is to be classed among the ceremonial institutions, which were "a shadow of things to come." If the latter position can be established, it can be of no use whatever to perpetuate the Institution under the New Dispensation. It can neither be promotive of the spirituality and growth of the body of Christ, nor even conservative of the morals of the community. To suppose that the church cannot enjoy all necessary prosperity, and attain its millennial glory by the use of New Covenant ordinances alone, but must borrow a little help from the abrogated rites of the Old Economy, is most anti-evangelical. Gal. iii. 3. The church needs nothing for the nourishment of its piety, except such means as have the entire sanction of the "better covenant." Moses is dead, and the Lord has buried him. He cannot lead us into the promised inheritance. We have only to follow our Joshua, even Jesus, "the Son who is consecrated forevermore."

Nor can "the weak and beggarly elements" be of service to promote the morals of the community. Where do we find the most elevated and pure morali-

ty, that which is refined from all selfishness? We find it only in real Christians. The source, and life, and power of it is the Atonement of their Great High-Priest, and the grace which is by Him. Their obedience to all moral precepts is the obedience of *faith*, even faith in his sacrifice. In proportion as their faith is strong, and their dependence on Him entire, to the exclusion of all reliance upon their own merit, so is their moral conduct irreproachable. It is not by any resort to the "weak and unprofitable commandment," that their morality acquires such excellence. As for that inferior kind of morality, which obtains among unbelievers, however profitable it may be to human society, it is but the mimic representation of that which is practiced by the godly. For its very existence it is dependent on Christianity, from whose influence if it recede, it becomes withered and perishes. Transplanted to a heathen soil, it cannot live. As, therefore, the general morals of the community are traceable to the gospel as their first cause, and are kept in credit only by its nurturing influence, it would be at war with sound reason to suppose, that they could be promoted by such things as are destructive of the purity of the gospel itself. They will be much safer, if left wholly to the nurturing influence of that system, which is declared to be 'complete and faultless,—the power and the wisdom of God.' Wherefore, if the weekly Sabbath was a ceremonial Institution, we have no use for it, either as it respects the church, or the world. It is an injury rather than a benefit.

But if, on the other hand, the Sabbath is a part of God's holy, and just, and good law, to which nothing but the carnal mind refuses subjection, Rom. viii. 7, it must be an institution of lasting value, to dispense with which is dangerous in the extreme. For the

transgression of this law is sin, 1 John iii. 4, and the wages of sin is death, Rom. vi. 23.

That the Sabbath was not a ceremonial institution, is proved from the fact that it was given to man before his Apostacy, Gen. ii. 1-3. There he had no need of a Redeemer, for he bore the image of his Maker in righteousness and true holiness. If man in his original state of uprightness had no need of a Redeemer, he certainly had no need of a type of the Redeemer. Types, in such a case, were unmeaning things, or else a source of vexation and horrible forebodings. If he understood their meaning, he could never look upon them, without thinking of the awful ruin into which he must soon be plunged by the fall. But this would both operate as a discouragement to all endeavors at steadfastness, and at the same time would exhibit the All-Benevolent God as marring the happiness of an innocent creature ;—an idea never to be admitted. We conclude, therefore, that the Sabbath, as originally instituted, possessed nothing of a ceremonial character. Typical institutions were introduced *after* the fall, to explain to ruined man the nature of that redemption of which he stood in need, and which in the fulness of the time would be provided for him. They were for his encouragement and consolation :—not to mar his happiness, but to promote it.

To evade the force of this argument, some contend that the Sabbath was not actually instituted and given to man in Paradise ; that the sanctification of it mentioned by Moses, signifies only that appointment then made of the seventh day, to be afterwards solemnized and sanctified by the Jews. But the utter futility of this objection appears from our Savior's declaration, that "the Sabbath was made for man." Mark ii. 27. If it was made for man, it was made for him *as*

man ; the very word denoting mankind at large, or rather, referring to the first man as the representative of the whole human race. It was made for him as a human, rational, intelligent creature ; for his benefit *as such*, without reference to the particular nation or country to which he might belong. If it was made for his benefit, is it reasonable to suppose that it was, nevertheless, kept in abeyance for twenty-five hundred years ? Made for man, and yet not given to him ! The world teeming with human beings, and yet the very institution that was designed for their temporal and spiritual welfare, kept from them for more than two thousand years, and then given only to an isolated people forming but a fraction of the human race ! The idea is monstrous absurdity. An institution so important to the interests of humanity, of civilization, and of religion, was wanted immediately, as well as at the distance of two thousand years afterwards.

The objection is farther confuted by a consideration of the reason which enforces the institution. The reason is, " that God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." The natural inference is, that the institution existed from the time the reason of it did. Human legislators, it is true, may not enact a law, until long after a good reason exists for doing so ; because they may be blind to the existence of such a reason, and slow to discover it. But not so with God. If the work of creation, and his resting from it on the seventh day, is at any period of the world a good reason that man should rest on that day, it was a good reason from the beginning. It was good as soon as there were men to do it. So that what was then their reasonable service, could not have been deferred for twenty-five hundred years. Nay, it may be safely affirmed, that the reason for

keeping the Sabbath possessed more cogency at the beginning than it did afterwards. For in after ages sin had marred and defaced the Almighty's work. Nevertheless, if when sin had marred it, there was still good reason for keeping the memorial of it, much more was there good reason for doing so, when it was in all its original glory. In what respect does or did this reason concern the Jews more than any other part of mankind? Do not Gentiles stand on the same level with them in respect of their being a part of God's creation? Have they not as much interest in creation as the Jews? "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not of the Gentiles also?"

The reasons for such institutions as were enjoined on the Jews particularly, were derived from considerations in which they as a people had a special and peculiar interest. Now the Sabbath, it is true, is in one place enforced upon them by a consideration of this kind, viz. their redemption from bondage in Egypt, Deut. v. 15. But while this laid the Jews under a special and peculiar obligation to regard the institution, it does not forbid the idea that they were also under obligations of a general nature, which concern all mankind alike. So too, the Christian church is under a special obligation too keep this sacred day, because of its interest in the blood of redemption. But to infer from this, that the common obligation under which all others are held is canceled, and that none are bound to keep it except the blood-bought church of God, would be in the last degree illogical, as well as unscriptural.

Let it be observed, that the language of the sacred historian: "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it"—is no more qualified, than that which speaks of his resting. With reference to this, his language is explicit,—“He rested on the seventh day from all

his work which he had made." In face of such a declaration, nothing but folly would say, that God did not actually rest on the seventh day of creation, but waited until the Jews were called out of Egypt. God certainly did rest on the seventh day of creation. If the ordinary construction of language is to be employed in reference to this, it must be employed in reference to his blessing and sanctifying it also. Wherefore, as God rested on the seventh day of creation, he blessed and sanctified that day, even that very day on which he rested. "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in *it*, [the very day which he so blessed and sanctified,] he had rested from all his work which God created and made." Gen. ii. 3.

The act of blessing and sanctifying the day can import nothing else than constituting it a Sabbath. For to sanctify, undoubtedly, is to set apart for a holy use. It refers to some line of conduct to be observed by men towards that day. The expression, "God blessed it," must mean that he rendered it a day peculiarly happy and beneficial for man. For whenever God blesses an object, whether it be a person or an inanimate thing—a rational creature or the brute creation—he connects with his blessing certain favors which would otherwise not be bestowed, and renders the object serviceable for the promotion of certain purposes which would not result without his blessing. A few examples will render this perfectly clear. Thus, when he blessed the first human pair, and the brute creation, he bestowed on them the power to be "fruitful and multiply." When the ground receiveth blessing from God, it bringeth forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed. When it is cursed, it bears thorns and briars, Heb. vi. 7, 8. Gen. xxvii. 27. Lev. xxv. 21. Mal. iii. 10. When God



blessed Abraham, he bestowed on him a numerous posterity, with Canaan for an inheritance, and counted his faith for righteousness. In blessing Samson, Judges xiii. 24, he endowed him with an heroic spirit, singular valor, miraculous strength of body, and all other gifts and graces necessary to his calling. When he blesses the church, he bestows spiritual blessings in Christ, Eph. i. 3. Numerous other examples might be adduced: but these are sufficient to show, that in connection with the Divine blessing, special favors are always bestowed. We therefore argue, that when it is said, "God blessed the seventh day," it can mean nothing less than that he connected with it favors and benefits above what are connected with any other day, and that he bestows them abundantly upon those who keep it, and delight in it, Isa. lviii. 13. He renders the day serviceable for the promotion of the spiritual and temporal welfare of man. For it can by no means be supposed, that God proposed to render homage to himself, or to bless himself. It must be man, for whom the Sabbath was made, Mark ii. 27, that stands in need of the blessing, and who is bound to make a holy use of the day.

The foregoing remarks are judged sufficient to destroy the notion of the Sabbath being a ceremonial institution. But we will not yet dismiss the subject. If it was a ceremony, why was its importance magnified above all the other ceremonies? Why that pre-eminence and sanctity, which it had above all other types? It rears its head high above all the ritual institutions, and holds this superiority throughout the whole Mosaic Economy. Not only is it counted worthy of being graven by the finger of God upon the stone tablets, thus having the same honor as all the other precepts of the Decalogue, which are confessedly moral; but even where it appears in combi-

nation with the ceremonial usages, its great importance as a moral institute directed to the highest ends, is clearly exhibited.

“For first, after the record of the promulgation of the Decalogue, three chapters of judicial statutes follow; but in the midst of these, the people are reminded of the essential importance of the Sabbath, in a manner quite distinct and peculiar. It is associated with the primary duty of worshiping the one true God, as of equal obligation, and indeed as necessary to it. ‘Six days shalt thou do thy work, and on the seventh thou shalt rest, \* \* in all things that I have said unto thee, be circumspect, and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth,’ Exod. xxiii. 12, 13. This is sufficiently remarkable.

“Again, after six chapters more concerning the tabernacle and its various sacrifices, the whole communication of the forty days’ abode on the mount is concluded with a re-inculcation of the Sabbath-rest, in a manner the most solemn and affecting. ‘And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, verily my Sabbath ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD THAT DOTHTH SANCTIFY YOU. Ye shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy unto you; every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath-day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of



Israel forever, for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.' *Exod. xxxi. 12—17.* Can any thing give dignity to the sacred day, as founded in the essential relation of man to his Maker and Redeemer, if this sublime language does not? Every idea of sanctification, every sense of importance from a sign of a covenant between God and man, every sanction derived from the awful punishment of death, unite to impress upon us the duty; whilst the proportion noted between the working days and the day of rest, and the reason drawn from the order of creation, extend the obligation to every human being."\*

This great prominence which the Sabbath had amidst all the ceremonial laws, was equivalent to an intimation that the ritual service must never take the precedence of moral duties; that in the multitude of their offerings and shadowy service, the worshipers must still remember that true holiness does not consist in them, but in something higher; and that all their conformity to the ritual service must proceed upon moral footing, otherwise it is abomination in the sight of God.

But come with me, reader, a little farther, and see how the scriptures magnify the Sabbath at the very time they comparatively underrate the importance of ceremonial observances. Compare carefully *Isa. i. 11—14*, with chapters *lvi. 1—8*, and *lviii. 13, 14*, of the same prophecy. See how in the one case the ritual service is degraded, and in the other the Sabbath is exalted, and the holy keeping of it made the condition on which depends the acceptance of their burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Consider the language of *Jeremiah. chap. xvii. 192—7.* Read the passage

\* Wilson.

with care, and see how all the prosperity of the nation, all the favor of God, is suspended on this one branch of moral obedience; with which compare his language concerning ceremonial observances. "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you," Jer. vii. 22, 23. A comparison of these passages shows that Sabbath-breaking stood upon the same level with the breach of all moral precepts, and characterized them as a disobedient and rebellious people; while the neglect of ceremonial observances is classed in a different category. Ezekiel follows in the same strain, chap. xx. 12, 13, 16. In the book of Psalms too, we have the Sabbath and its holy duties and pleasures extolled, Ps. xcii, while ceremonies are depreciated, Ps. l. 8, 14, li. 16, 17. And what was the great reformation which the prophets after the captivity sought to accomplish? Was not Sabbath-breaking the crying sin upon which they dwelt? Look at the holy zeal of Nehemiah. His faithful and searching rebukes proceed not upon their omission of ceremonial duties, but upon their neglect of the great and paramount duty of keeping the Sabbath, Neh. xiii. 15, 21, 22. In view of these scripture references, does the Sabbath look like a ceremony—a shadow—a mere element of the world, weak and beggarly!

Again, if the Sabbath was a part of the ceremonial law, why was Christ at such pains to regulate the manner of observing it? Matt. xii. 1, 13. Why so careful to modify the false usages that obtained?

Why did he lay down distinctions between what is lawful to be done, and what is unlawful? Was this his manner when any thing ceremonial was the subject of dispute? Do we not find him, in such cases, waiving the subject at issue, in order to inculcate matters of lasting importance? How was it in his interview with the Samaritan woman? John iv. Her question in regard to the proper place of worship was merely of a ceremonial nature, yet it had been hotly disputed between her nation and the Jews. Does Jesus become an umpire in the case? No. The ceremonial institutions were about to vanish away; He himself came to end them. Therefore he occupies himself, not in settling the litigated questions that grew out of them, but in preaching great and everlasting truths. In regard to the Moral Law, however, he is at especial pains to vindicate it from all Pharisaic austerities, to remove all false glosses, and to assert its everlasting equity and glory. Witness his admirable exposition of it in his sermon on the mount. Witness too, his exposure of the hypocritical tradition concerning the fifth commandment, Matt. xv. 1—9. With this, his vindication of the Sabbath, his care to purge it from traditional corruptions, is perfectly parallel. But what sane mind ever thought that he proclaimed the fifth commandment to be of a ceremonial nature? Yet, strange to say, the precisely similar course which he took in regard to the Sabbath, has, by some, been made an argument that he abolished it as nothing but a Jewish ceremony.

‘But drowning men catch at straws.’ In spite of the overwhelming proof that the Sabbath had its origin before ceremonial observances could, with any reason, have been introduced, it is contended that it must have been merely a Mosaic institution, because no mention is made of its observance from the creation

down to the time of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. It is asked, 'whether men during all that time, though otherwise so wicked, sanctified the Sabbath so universally and perfectly, that not one among them ever needed an excitement to duty, or a reproof for the neglect of it.' But to this question, however triumphantly proposed, we are as ready to answer, No, as the objector himself. That the great mass of men, during all this time, were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, is admitted. But because they were not particularly reproofed for Sabbath-breaking, no more proves that it was not a sin cognizable by the moral law, than the fact of God's winking at the times of the Gentiles' ignorance and idolatry, Acts xvii. 30, proves that their conduct was not cognizable as a sin against his law. If God passed over the Sabbath-breaking of those who lived in the first ages of the world without particularly taking notice of it, the same may be said of his carriage towards the Gentile world, in reference to *all* their wickedness for four thousand years. Besides, is not the drunkenness of Noah passed over without reproof? Is not Lot's incest with his daughters?—and Jacob's cheating Esau of the patrimony?—and the plurality of the patriarchs' wives? Were these things not contrary to the Divine Law, because they were "winked at?" Or, to come to cases still more in point, we observe that the silence of scripture respecting the observance of the Sabbath during the ante-Mosaic age, is no more than what occurs in regard to the period between Moses and the time of David, near four hundred years. Yet who ever doubted that it was observed during all this time? So also the rite of circumcision is not so much as alluded to from a little after the death of Moses, till the days of Jeremiah, a period of eight hundred years or more. Nor is the ordinance of the red

heifer once mentioned from the Pentateuch till the close of the Old Testament. But who doubts the constant observance of these ceremonies? The objection, therefore, which is raised from the silence of Scripture, has no force whatever.

But whoever considers the very concise manner in which events are narrated in scripture, and that the history of two thousand years is all compressed within the compass of fifty short chapters, occupying about as many pages, will cease to wonder that no notice is taken of the observance of the Sabbath by the pious patriarchs. This very conciseness is a sufficient solution to a candid mind, without resorting to the supposition that there was no observance of the institution. Moreover, any one that peruses with attention the accounts of pious characters contained in the word of God, will see that no express mention is made of their acts of religion, unless something remarkable attaches to them.\* Abraham's faith is mentioned, because it was remarkable. So of Abel, of Noah, and of Enoch. But in regard to their observance of the Sabbath in particular, it is not probable that any thing remarkable or extraordinary was connected with it, rendering it of sufficient importance to the world at large to be recorded.

The position that we have taken is, that the Sabbath was instituted in Paradise, when man was innocent; that it was binding before Judaism had any existence. We have seen that the silence of scripture as to any reproof given to the transgressor of it, does not shake this position; that its silence as to any commendation bestowed upon the pious for keeping it, does not shake it; and that its entire silence is no more than what obtains with regard to the Sabbath

\* Burnside.

from Moses to David, or with regard to circumcision from Joshua to Jeremiah, or with regard to the red heifer from Moses to the end of the Old Testament. Is there any thing yet remaining to weaken the force of our arguments?

In the opinion of our opponents there is one thing more. It is argued, from Ex. xvi., that the Sabbath was first made known to the Israelites in the wilderness, by the falling of the manna. But we can discover nothing in the whole history of the matter, as given by Moses, which intimates that the Sabbath was then made known for the first. On the contrary, the abruptness of the reference implies very strongly the previous knowledge of it. This idea receives strong confirmation from the fact, that when the people were reminded of the institution, nothing was said to them concerning the reason of its being their duty to keep it; which would hardly have been the case, had the subject been then presented to them for the first time. For it is worthy of note, that God condescends to give the reason of this command; a thing which he does not for moral precepts in general. He gives the reason, because man cannot discover it for himself, it being purely a matter of revelation that God made the world in six days, and rested on the seventh. Whereas, other moral precepts are more readily discoverable from the light of nature. Now, if God condescends in any place, and at any time, to give the reason for a command, we might expect it would be at the time of its first promulgation. In Gen. ii., where we suppose the law to be first given, the reason accompanies it; but in the passage now under consideration it does not.

Again, it is nowhere in the context intimated that the object of giving the manna was to make known the Sabbath. On the contrary, the declared object of



supplying their wants in this miraculous manner, was to make the Israelites know that it was the Lord Jehovah who brought them out of Egypt, v. 6, and not Moses and Aaron, as they intimated, v. 3, to make them know that the Lord was their God, v. 12, and to prove them, whether they would manifest their gratitude for his merciful interposition in their favor, by walking in his law, or no, v. 4. This was the express and primary object. To make known the Sabbath is not even hinted as having been the *subordinate*, much less the *principal* object.

## SECTION II.

### ARGUMENT FROM THE DECALOGUE.

We commenced this essay with the design of showing that the Sabbath is a necessary part of the immutable law of God—that law which is “holy, and just, and good;” which is “spiritual;” to which nothing is opposed but that which is carnal. Hitherto, we have rested none of our proofs upon the fact, that it was incorporated in the Decalogue; that it is one of the TEN WORDS “which God spake in the Mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more.” Deut. v. 22. For to assume that the Decalogue, as such, is the moral law, and that the Sabbath, because it makes a part of it, is therefore everlastingly binding, may not be satisfactory to some of our readers.

That the Decalogue, as such, held a peculiar aspect towards the Jews, different from that which it holds towards any others, is freely admitted. It made a part of their civil code; it was incorporated with their political laws, and, therefore, temporal penalties were annexed, which were inflicted by the civil ma-

gistrate. Offences against the most of its precepts were punishable by death, Sabbath-breaking not excepted. Hence some contend that these precepts ought not to be called, by way of eminence, "*the Moral Law*;" that the fact of their having been graven upon stone, and given under circumstances of greater pomp and glory than the other precepts of the Old Testament, constitutes no solid argument for their being so called. The greater glory of their promulgation from the Mount of God, is supposed to be sufficiently accounted for, by considering them as the *Constitution*, or *Grand Platform*, upon which was based the whole of that system which was peculiar to the Jews. The Decalogue, therefore, is supposed to bear about the same relation to the other precepts spoken by Moses, as *constitution* bears to *statute law*. This view is thought to be favored by those passages which call the stone tables "the tables of the Covenant." Heb. ix. 4. Hence, as they say, the Covenant being abrogated, the tables of the Covenant are set aside also; on the same principle that when a political government is dissolved the constitution is of no farther use.

Upon this seemingly plausible argument we offer the following remarks :

1. Admitting that the Decalogue is the grand constitution of the Jewish polity, and that it has an excellence over the other precepts spoken by Moses, precisely like that of constitution over statute law; still we think it could not, in the nature of things, be any thing less than a code of morals. There was a necessity of the strongest kind, that it should embody all the essential elements of the moral law. For, as obedience to statute law must proceed from constitutional principles, so the obedience of the Israelites to the whole system of Moses must proceed upon moral

footing. Any other obedience than this—any obedience which is of an inferior kind, God does not require, and cannot, consistently with his holy nature. No matter what is the nature of the precepts He gives, obedience to them must be upon moral principle. A love for the great principles of righteousness must regulate it all ; for this only is the pledge that they will rigidly, and without deviation, conform to any system that He enjoins upon them. Therefore, the Moral Law, or rather the essential elements of it, go before all the other laws He gave to the children of Israel. If they will keep this law, which they promised to do, *Exod. xix. 8*, it is a pledge that they will keep all the rest.

2. Though the covenant character of the Decalogue is abolished, by reason of the Sinaitic Covenant being entirely abrogated, the moral character of it remains untouched, and just the same as it was before a covenant was based upon it. Hence, though we are under no covenant obligation to its precepts, we are under a moral obligation to them. The Jews were under a covenant obligation to the Decalogue, brought upon them by the transaction at Sinai. But Jews and Gentiles were alike under moral obligation to its precepts, antecedently to the covenant made at Sinai. Let men learn to distinguish between covenant obligation and moral obligation, and they will have no difficulty on this point.\*

3. If the covenant character of the Decalogue is abolished, and all covenant obligation destroyed along with it, of course those temporal penalties which

\* "The Decalogue, as to the form of it, and as delivered through the hand and ministry of Moses, only concerned that people (Israel), and was calculated for their use ; though, as to the matter of it, and so far as it is of a moral nature, and agrees with the law and light of nature, it is equally binding on the Gentiles."—*Dr. Gill*.

were annexed to its precepts are also abolished. But the moral penalty, the death of the soul, remains to be inflicted upon every impenitent transgressor. Hence the Sabbath-breaker, as well as the idolator, the profane swearer, and the adulterer, though not obnoxious to death, as the despiser of Moses' law, is yet obnoxious to the curse of God, and must inherit it by being punished with everlasting destruction from His presence, and from the glory of His power.

What is it then? Not only do the ten commandments possess a moral character, independent of their inscription upon the stone tablets, as the grand constitutional platform of the Jewish Theocracy; but they possess this moral character BECAUSE they compose this constitution. For the constitution, as we have already proved, could not, in the nature of things, be any thing else than a summary of moral precepts. Therefore, as the Sabbath is one of these precepts, it is a part of the moral law, and remains of everlasting force and obligation.

In our defense of the ten commandments, we do *not* "contradistinguish them from the rest by calling the former exclusively *the* moral law, and all the other divine instructions of the Jews, through Moses, *the* ceremonial law." We not only admit, but strongly insist, that moral duties are inculcated elsewhere besides in the Decalogue. "When the Jews are told, *Exod. xxii. 22, Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child*, we need no scholastic definitions to enable us to recognize this as a part of the moral code."\* But we *do* suppose that the Decalogue comprises the *elementary principles* of the moral law. We suppose, that whatever moral duty is inculcated elsewhere, it is deducible from one or other of the ten

\* Bap. Advocate of Jan. 16, 1841.

commandments. We can hardly imagine a single condition in which it is possible for man to be placed in this life, or a relation that he sustains, which is not cognizable by this code.

Our doctrine receives strength from the prominence given to the Decalogue in the New Testament. No small degree of honor is put upon it by the Savior, in his Sermon on the Mount, an important part of that celebrated discourse being occupied with expositions of its precepts, and applications of them to the conduct of men, as the subjects of God's moral government. Again, when the young man came to Christ, and asked, "What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life," he was told to keep the commandments. That by these were meant the precepts of the Decalogue, is evident from the Savior's immediately beginning to quote those precepts. Matt. xix. 16—19. The fact that they were enjoined with reference to *eternal* life, proves conclusively that their bearing was not merely upon the conduct of men as citizens of the Jewish commonwealth, but upon their conduct as moral and accountable creatures.\* Again, when the Apostle inculcates those duties which are the mark of love to our neighbor, he quotes the precepts of the second table of the Decalogue. Rom. xiii. 9. It is evident, also, that Paul refers particularly to the Decalogue as the law which convinced him of sin. Rom. vii. 7. For he cites the tenth precept of it, as showing him that strong desire after things forbidden is sin. This is the commandment which, being powerfully applied to his heart, made him to revive, and he died: ver. 9. Hence he in-

\* Christ inculcates only the precepts of the second table of the law, not because they are of more importance than those of the first, but because they are less easily counterfeited. Such duties are by far too weighty to be permanently sustained by the hollow-heartedness of the hypocrite.

cludes the Decalogue, when he speaks of that law which is "spiritual, and holy, and just, and good:" vs. 12, 14; to which the carnal mind, refusing subjection, is therefore enmity against God. Rom. viii 7. One more example. Paul writing, not to Jews, but to converts from among the Gentiles, recognizes the usual arrangement of the Decalogue, and its validity as a rule of duty under the Gospel, when he says, concerning filial obedience, that it is the first commandment which has a promise annexed to it. Eph. vi. 1, 2. In the following verse he states what the promise is, presenting it as a motive to obedience. This proves that no commandment had been changed or dispossessed of its place.

In asserting the importance of the Decalogue, the reader will observe that we do not particularly insist upon the manner and circumstances of its promulgation. We dwell not upon the fact of its having been written with God's own finger upon stone, while Mosaic institutions were engrossed by Moses himself upon parchment. We dwell not upon the thunders, lightnings, thick clouds, the loud blast of the trumpet, and the voice of Jehovah from the midst of the fire; all which conspire to throw around the ten commandments a glory not belonging to the ceremonial precepts. These things we pass, aware that men will evade the argument from them, by the supposition that they prove nothing more than that kind of superiority which the constitution of a state has over statute law. We can hardly refrain, however, from observing, as we pass, that as the ark was the throne of God, Exod. xxv. 22, Num. vii. 89, xvii. 4, Ps. xcix. 1—it is difficult to conceive how righteousness and judgment were the habitation of his throne, Ps. xcvi. 2, if the "ten words" which were there deposited were not designed to be an expression of



His perfections, and the eternal rule of right to His creatures.

But we think we have placed the morality of the Decalogue upon grounds that cannot be successfully disputed. Having thus secured it, we advert to the foregoing circumstances, not as direct proof of the truth of our argument, but as so much collateral evidence. There is one circumstance, however, which ought not to be passed over lightly. The tables of stone were deposited in the ark, and covered over by the mercy seat. On the great day of atonement, when the High Priest entered into the Most Holy, he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice upon this mercy seat, and upon the floor before it, thus making an atonement for the sins of the people. But did this blood in reality atone for the sins of the people against that law which was concealed under the mercy seat? No. Not only was it no atonement for moral offences, Heb. x. 4, but it was not even an atonement for their political violation of this code. For such violation, in regard to most of its precepts, was a capital crime, and could not be expiated under that covenant. The whole process, therefore, was typical or prefigurative of the grand atonement made for the sins of the world by Jesus Christ, the High-Priest of our profession. Heb. iii. 1. The argument derived from it in favor of the Decalogue is, that what the law by its offerings could not do, God, sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Rom. viii. 3. For Christ enters into the Most Holy, even unto Heaven itself, with his own blood, and makes a real atonement for sins. In other words, the legal sacrifices could not reach to sins against the Decalogue, but Christ's sacrifice did, and therefore the superiority of the gospel over the law is fully established. But the whole argument for the

superiority of the Christian sacrifice becomes null and void, on the supposition that the atonement had reference to any other law than the Decalogue.

Now if the Decalogue, as a whole, has a claim to be called a summary of the moral law, the Sabbath derives in this way no small degree of authority. For it is a very important part of the Ten Words, standing right in the very heart of them, and bound up along with them; so that, whatever dignity and excellence the rest have, this has also. We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion, that when the Savior says, "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law," the Sabbath is alluded to as much as any other precept. That when the Apostle teaches, the law is not made void through faith, Rom. iii. 31, he means, among other things, that the Sabbath is not made void by the gospel, but rather established. That when he says "the law is spiritual," Rom. vii. 14, he means that the Sabbath law, as well as all other precepts, is spiritual; and that none reject it but those who are "carnal, sold under sin."

But we shall hear it objected, that the fourth commandment is not transferred to the New Testament, and re-enacted there, while all the other commandments are. This, however, is taking a wrong view of the case, altogether. The truth is, that no moral precept is re-enacted in the New Testament. What necessity is there for re-enacting laws which never expired? The very notion of re-enacting implies their previous expiration. Wherefore, if those precepts of the moral law which we find in the New Testament are there for no other reason than because they are re-enacted, it follows that they must have expired with the Old Covenant. If they expired with it, they were peculiar to it, and must have had their origin in it. If they were peculiar to it, and

originated in it, then all obligation to obey them was merely covenant obligation, while moral or natural obligation is supposed to have had no existence. But this conclusion is an absurdity, and if carried out still farther, leads to multiplied absurdities.

Whatever laws are enacted in the New Testament, are altogether new and peculiar to that covenant of which Jesus is the mediator. They emanated from him in his character of Head of the Church. Baptism is one of them. It is, however, a new institution, peculiar to the New Covenant, and was not brought over from the old. The Lord's Supper is another, yet it is a new Covenant ordinance entirely, and therefore, like baptism, is to be observed only by believers. But as for the *re-enacting* of laws, it is a thing altogether unknown in the New Covenant, and inconsistent with its nature.

The notion of the necessity of re-enacting the Sabbath in the New Testament, arises altogether from supposing that it is a covenant institution or church ordinance. But if it is a church ordinance, it can be binding upon none but believers; on the same principle that the ordinances of the Mosaic church were binding upon none but Jews. Is any one prepared to take this ground? We think not. Those who acknowledge the necessity of any Sabbath whatever, consider the observance of it a duty devolving upon men irrespective of their connection with the church, binding them in the isolated and individual capacity, even though church privileges were altogether out of the question. Were an individual abiding in some lone cavern of the Rocky Mountains, or roaming the uninhabited and trackless wastes of the earth, far, far from scenes of busy life, the law of God still binds him "to remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy."

The truth is, the Sabbath is not properly an ordi-

nance of either of the covenants. It originated in neither of them, but was in existence long before any covenant was revealed to man. Hence, after the Old Covenant was abrogated, it remained just what it was before. So that if, in the history of the New Covenant, or what is commonly called the New Testament, there was not one word of allusion to the Sabbath in particular, it would not affect the argument in the least.\*

\* Most writers on this subject, though they admit the morality of the Sabbath, and the claims it has upon all men indiscriminately, appear to reason in a manner entirely different, when they come to contend for a change from the seventh to the first day of the week. Their arguments, which before were predicated upon the nature and fitness of things, and the requirements of God, as the natural Lawgiver of mankind, are suddenly changed and based upon the new dispensation of Jesus Christ. Now this is an inconsistency; but it is one to which they are necessarily driven, in order to give plausibility to the claims of their new Sabbath. The fact that Christ introduced a new dispensation, does not argue a change of the Sabbath, or an institution of a new one, unless it can be proved that the old Sabbath was a church ordinance. If it was, then, as there is a new church state, of course we must look for new church ordinances.

How, then, will it be proved, that the old Sabbath was a church ordinance? Will it be said that the observance of it was indispensable to membership in the Jewish church? Very true. But the same may be said of the laws concerning murder, and theft, and adultery. Yet these were not, properly speaking, church ordinances. Concerning these things men were bound, though no church had ever existed. The sin of murder lay at Cain's door, long before any church was formed. The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence, before the Jews were organized into a church; and the sin of dishonoring his father blackened the character of Ham, long before the fifth commandment was published from Sinai. So, too, the Sabbath was set apart by God sanctifying it and blessing it, more than two thousand years before it entered into the statute law of Israel. It cannot, therefore, be a church ordinance.

Will it be said, that the Sabbath, though not altogether a church ordinance, is nevertheless so in part? If this can be established, then certainly so much of it as partook of this character must necessarily have been abolished by the death of Christ, and that part only remains which had no such character. But I ask, what part of the Sabbath law can claim to be a church or-

But is it true, that the Sabbath is not sanctioned by the New Testament? What means our Savior's course in regulating the manner of its observance, in vindicating it from Pharisaic austerities, determining what is lawful to be done, &c., Matt. xii. 1—13. It can mean nothing else than sanctioning it, as a precept of the moral law, as we have already shown in our remarks upon this text, p. 10. But even if 'his express sanction were wholly wanting, inasmuch as it is a part of the moral law, as we have clearly proved, it stands firm, unaltered, and unalterable, receiving, from the very nature of the case, all the sanction of the New Covenant. It is impossible for the New Covenant to affect it in any other way than to strengthen and uphold it.

### SECTION III.

#### RELATION OF THE SABBATH TO POSITIVE INSTITUTIONS

Is there then no difference between the law of the Sabbath and the other precepts of the decalogue? We do not mean to say there is no difference whatever. There is something in it which partakes of the nature of a *positive institution*, as theologians are

dinance, peculiar to the old dispensation. It will be said that the particular day of the week set apart for observance, was such. This, as all the world confesses, was the seventh in distinction from every other. But the same rule which determines every other part of the Sabbath law to be something else than a church ordinance, determines the same thing with regard to the seventh day of the week. If the Sabbath was not a church ordinance, but obligatory upon all men indiscriminately, long before any church existed, the same is true of the seventh day of the week. One part of the law was not brought into existence without the other, nor one part before the other. We conclude, therefore, that the particular day which was consecrated, partook no more of the nature of a church ordinance, than all the rest of the law did.

pleased to term it. Positive institutions are generally considered to be such as are not discoverable by the light of nature, their obligation resting upon the mere will of the Lawgiver. While on the other hand, moral precepts are supposed to be ascertained by the light of nature, and to be binding independently of any appointment of the Lawgiver.

We are free to admit the positive nature of the Sabbatic institution, so far as it respects the particular day to be observed, and the proportion of time; also as it respects the great reason on which the law is founded. For it is not a dictate of nature, that one seventh part of time is more holy, or has any more demand upon us in a religious way, than one tenth, or one fifth, or any other proportion. Nor is it a dictate of nature, that God created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh, blessing and sanctifying it. The light of nature, it is true, teaches that the world was created by eternal Power; but it gives no information of the time occupied in it, nor of the fact of its resting on the seventh day, after it was finished. Therefore, so far as the mere light of nature is concerned, we are left in the dark respecting what constitutes the very foundation of the institution.

But after all, we very much doubt the propriety of classing all those precepts which we cannot discover by the mere light of nature, under the sweeping name of positive institutions, as if they were on the same level with the passover, circumcision, the ordinance of the red heifer, &c. Indeed, we utterly protest against it, if the intention is to underrate their importance, or to depreciate them as "*non-essential*," according to the cant term of the day. For what in such case would become of the whole system of Christianity itself? We mean the system of appointing a Mediator, and the redemption of the world



through him. It is a positive institution, that is, purely a matter of revelation, and wholly undiscoverable by the light of nature. But shall we therefore call it a non-essential? Shall we regard it as something of minor importance in comparison with the religion of nature? Does it not devolve upon us with obligations just as strong and overwhelming as the moral law? Most certainly it does; not only because it is enjoined by the same authority, but also because it is the only means of promoting a conformity to the moral law. The same may be said of all positive institutions: they are designed to promote a conformity first to that dispensation to which they are peculiar, and second, to the moral law.

Whoever attempts a close investigation of the nature of positive institutions, will find that the line of separation between them and moral duties, is not always so easy to be drawn as might at first be imagined. We say, indeed, that the former are not discoverable by the light of nature. The reason of that, however, may be, not because they do not in reality originate in the nature of things, but merely because our powers of discovery are so feeble. Were these powers expanded, and the range of our intellectual vision widened, we might possibly see that those very institutions we call positive, grow naturally and necessarily out of the relation between God and us. Not only might we see the reasons of positive institutions in general, (which indeed is already sufficiently obvious,) but with such enlarged capacities, we might see the reason why such particular ones are pitched upon rather than others. The real difference between moral and positive duties may, after all, be nothing more than this, that the former we can readily discover for ourselves, narrow as the range of our vision is—while the latter we are so short-sighted,

we cannot discover, and are therefore wholly dependent on revelation for them. Hence we suppose it is assuming more than can be proved, when it is argued that positive appointments are altogether arbitrary, and have no real foundation in the nature and fitness of things.\*

Now when we admit that the Sabbath is a positive institution, we mean that it is not discoverable by the light of nature, but is purely a matter of revelation; and this is all we mean. It still possesses the main attributes of a moral precept. For as we have already shown, any duty which has its origin in the natural relation of creature to Creator, must be of a moral nature, whether we can discover it for our-

\* "The reason of positive institutions in general, is very obvious; though we should not see the reason why such particular ones are pitched upon, rather than others. Whoever, therefore, instead of caviling at words, will attend to the thing itself, may clearly see, that positive institutions in general, as distinguished from this or that particular one, have the nature of moral commands, since the reasons of them appear. Thus, for instance, the *external* worship of God is a moral duty, though no particular mode of it be so. Care then is to be taken, when a comparison is made between moral and positive duties, that they be compared no farther than as they are different—no farther than as the former are positive, or arise out of mere external command, the reasons of which we are not acquainted with; and as the latter are moral, or arise out of the apparent reason of the case, without such external command. Unless this caution be observed, we shall run into endless confusion."—*Butler's Analogy of Religion to Nature. Part II. Chap. 1.*

It is very commonly said, that positive institutions are changeable, and therefore are unlike moral precepts, which are unchangeable and eternal in their nature. But we deny that positive precepts are changeable, so long as the relation subsists in which they originate. Such positive institutions as originated in the peculiar relation which God sustained towards the Jews, by reason of the Sinaitic covenant, remained unchanged and unchangeable so long as that relation subsisted. Such as originate in the relation He sustains towards man as his Redeemer through Jesus Christ, also remain unchangeable so long as such relation remains. On the same principle, such as originate in the natural relation He bears to man as his Creator, remain just as long as this relation exists; which is forever.

selves, or whether by reason of our short-sightedness, we are altogether dependent on revelation for it. That such is the origin of the Sabbath law, is plain from the most casual inspection of it. It grew out of God's creating the world in six days, and resting on the seventh, and is a constant memorial of it. Besides, it provides for the performance of the worship of God, which is confessedly a moral duty; while the satisfaction it yields to the conscience of every man, is a sufficient indication of its parity with other moral precepts.\*

But to dismiss all further argument concerning the distinction between moral and positive duties, let it be admitted that the Sabbath is a positive institution in the very strictest sense; let it be admitted to be nothing more than an arbitrary appointment, having no foundation in the natural and primary relation of man to his Creator—it must nevertheless remain in force so long as that dispensation lasts to which it is peculiar. Hence it must still be in force; for the dispensation to which it belongs, is the dispensation of nature itself. While the dispensation of nature lasts, the day which God the Creator originally “blessed and sanctified,” will continue to be sacred. It is utterly impossible that it should be otherwise; and therefore all speculations about its changeable nature.

\* President Dwight observes, [Sermon 185,] “The distinction between *moral* and *positive commands*, has been less clearly made by moral writers than most other distinctions.” He says the law of the Sabbath is entirely of a moral nature, as to the whole end to which it aims, so far as man is concerned; that “it makes no difference here, whether we could have known it without information from God, that one day in seven would be the best time, and furnish the best performance of these [religious] things, or no. It is sufficient that we know them.”

“The decalogue exhibits a *perfect standard of morality*; and a standard of morality not providing for the public acknowledgment and stated worship of God as the Creator, would be *essentially defective*.”—*Parkinson's Letters to Elder W. B. Maxson.*

resulting from its being a positive appointment, are vain. Changeable and positive as were the carnal ordinances of the old economy, they were not changeable while that economy lasted, but were sacred throughout the whole of it. Changeable and positive as are the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, they are not changeable while the dispensation to which they belong continues, but are sacredly binding until the dispensation ends. So of the Sabbath; yes, even of the very day originally appointed.

Customary as it is with writers to draw the broad line of distinction between what they call the *moral* and *positive* parts of the institution, and whatever advantage it may have in *theory*, so far as *practice* is concerned, nothing is gained by it. Indeed, with those who pretend to be guided by divine revelation, rather than by the unaided deductions of their own minds, it is always an unnecessary distinction. He whose heart is subdued to the will of God, will not be studious to inquire which of his commands are of a moral, and which of a positive nature. His inquiry will be simply this: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" If God command, he will obey, let the nature of the command be what it will. Were man left to deduce the knowledge of his duty from the nature and fitness of things, without the aid of any light from above, God would not blame him if he should wholly neglect to practice those duties, which are commonly called positive. All that would be required of him in such case, would be the practice of those duties which are most obviously of the moral kind. But with the statute book of Almighty God in his hand, he stands on very different ground. He is thus brought under obligation—yea, under *moral* obligation, to esteem ALL the divine precepts concerning *all things*, to be right. Psalm cxix. 128.

## SECTION IV.

## THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF THE SABBATIC INSTITUTION.

There are very few bearing the Christian name—perhaps none except such as are a scandal to the profession—who do not feel the importance of a weekly day of rest, which shall be dedicated to the service of the Most High God. Whatever may be their scruples in regard to the application of the term *Sabbath* to such a day, and though they may suppose that it is not to be observed according to the rigorous exactness of the ancient law, they nevertheless feel that it would be sapping the foundation of religion, morality, and good order, to abolish all distinction of days, leaving none for religious and moral improvement. Nay, even those who, in theory, maintain that under the gospel all days are alike, still feel—though it is difficult for them to account for it—that their theory and their experience will not harmonize together. Their very nature calls for a day of repose, while the wants of their souls are so clamorous as to drive them to some moral and religious improvement of it. If they heed not these monitions, they do but feel some aching void, some uneasy distress, wholly unlike those peaceful feelings which result from a due improvement of the season. Whatever be a man's *theory*, he *feels* better when he sanctifies one day in seven to the Lord : his body feels better—his soul feels better. This feeling is not one which grows out of the airy visions of a distempered brain ; but it is one which is capable of being resolved into solid arguments.

Without a Sabbath, it would be utterly impossible to promote the interests of religion. Were there no set time for suspending the business of the world, the

church of God would soon lose its visibility, and hell obtain complete triumph over the fallen soul of man. Ministers might preach, embodying in their discourses the most powerful reasoning, and garnishing the whole with the sweetest flowers of rhetoric ; but, to whom would they preach ? A few, of exalted piety, who rejoice in the sacred testimonies more than in all riches, and who feel that “ a day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand,” Psalm lxxxiv. 10, would perhaps be there. But the mass—the throng—the great multitude—would be elsewhere. They would be immersed in the service of the world, their souls perishing for lack of knowledge. It would be impossible, utterly impossible to bring the word of God to bear upon their minds. How then could they be saved ? For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, Rom. x. 17. And if men are not brought to believe the gospel, what becomes of the church ? Its visibility is gone—the gates of hell have prevailed against it. But God has sworn that the church shall stand ; nay, that all nations shall flow unto it, Isa. ii. 2. Wherefore, He who said “ the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” Matt. xvi. 18, is also Lord of the Sabbath for the benefit of the church. As Lord of the Sabbath, he will forever perpetuate an institution so necessary to the interests of his kingdom.

This object—the promotion of Zion’s welfare—could not be accomplished, unless the day were strictly a Sabbath ; that is, a day of rest from all sorts of work. It is not sufficient that the day be merely an honorable day—a notable season, or a day for holding religious meetings. If men are not obliged to intermit their worldly business, and that too by the express authority of God, they will give themselves but little trouble to repair to a place of worship. Or even should



they go, their minds would be so filled with the world, that the instructions from the desk would be as seed cast upon the way side. Even with regard to the Christian himself, how could the life of God be maintained in his soul, by an attention to religious duties just barely for the short space allotted to the public assembly? It would be impossible. His soul would be eaten up by the world. Public opportunities must be followed up by secret prayer, and close meditation in the sacred word. For this, one entire day in seven is little enough. The experience of all devoted Christians—let their theory about the Sabbath be what it may—has taught them, that nothing less will suffice to keep their souls in prosperity and health.

It appears, then, that we need just such a Sabbath as the fourth commandment enjoins; one, the law of which is, “in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.” If the great object of evangelizing men, and bringing them to the knowledge and worship of Jehovah cannot be accomplished with any thing less than one entire day in seven, sanctified for the purpose, then unquestionably we need a Sabbath. It is therefore fair to presume, that the Sabbath of the Decalogue was given with special reference to man’s necessities, and was not a mere *shadow* to be annulled for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

The Sabbath is necessary to promote the growth and strength of the moral principle. A man may render obedience to all the other precepts of the moral law; we may suppose them to be written on his heart; we may even suppose them to be so perfectly wrought into the temper and texture of his soul, that there is no deviation whatever. By his obedience he gives

evidence of being in possession of the great principle of holiness. But this principle lives not by its own inherent vitality; it must be nourished and fed continually, or it withers and dies. However holy, however perfect the creature may be, he possesses no self-replenishing, self-renovating principle,—he must constantly resort to the great uncreated source for new supplies. The contrary supposition makes him independent of his Maker. Now the Sabbath is the season set apart and sanctified by God Almighty for this very purpose. It is the means of grace for keeping alive the great moral principle—the season when the creature goes right up to the Great Fountain, and drinks of its invigorating streams, whereby he comes forth rejoicing as a strong man to run a race. Hence we find that even when man was innocent; when he was in possession of the moral principle to perfection, still he was not left without a Sabbath season for the replenishing of his spiritual powers. If he needed a Sabbath then, much more does he need it now. For though he has been created anew in Christ Jesus,—the principle of holiness being thus re-implanted—yet has he a harder task to live holy to the Lord, inasmuch as there is “a law in his members warring against the law of his mind,” “the flesh lusting against the spirit.” Therefore he needs all the aid the Sabbath can bring to his soul. He needs “the restoring, the awakening day—the day of recovery and reformation—the day that brings him back to recollection, to seriousness, to penitence, to prayer.” And when the last traces of sin shall have become obliterated, and man put in possession of all that perfection which pertains to the glorified state; still that perfection, we believe, will not be sustained by its own vitality, but will be preserved by means hav-

ing a similarity to those employed on earth. For it is an everlasting Sabbath there, Heb. vi. 9. Yes,

“—there’s a nobler rest above,  
To which our lab’ring souls aspire,  
With ardent pangs of strong desire.”

But that the great importance of the Sabbatic Institution may be more distinctly felt, let it be blotted out from existence. Not only let the day which God himself “sanctified and blessed,” be disregarded; but let there be no day whatever devoted as a season of rest and religious improvement. Let every thing which has the least semblance of the Sabbatic rest be annihilated. What now is the state of morals? What kind of order prevails in society? Why, men are not ashamed when they commit abomination, neither can they blush. They can glory in their shame, and hell seems to be let loose. What is true of communities, is also true of individuals. Such as have disregarded all seasons and opportunities for instruction in those principles which serve as restraints upon the heart, have proceeded from bad to worse; have become perfect pests of society, the ringleaders of all wickedness, at the head of every miscreant gang, foaming out their own shame, and ending their career in a prison or on the gallows. Witness the poor criminal, as he stands on the dividing line between time and eternity, and his long-slumbering conscience wakes up, and begins to speak out its thunders. What does he say in that dread moment, when he feels that the eye of God is directly upon him? What!—Why, that in the beginning of his career, all the powers of his nature called him to a day of rest, and warned him not to trample upon seasons devoted to moral and religious improvement;—that he disregarded these monitions, until at length the voice of conscience was hushed in silence, and

the work of death was easy. Therefore, says he, I am a ruined man. Reader, when you contemplate such facts, can you say that a Sabbath is not necessary? Do you not see that the obliteration of it is the brand upon the forehead of morality?

Need we, in this little essay, pause to consider the bearing of the Sabbath upon the temporal welfare of man? It is a matter so obvious, that we are almost ashamed to make it the subject of a separate paragraph. It is a fact well attested by experience, that the human frame sinks under uninterrupted toil. The utmost productive labor of man is in the proportion of six days exertion to one of repose. So that the Sabbath, instead of being an interruption to our necessary business, is really a help to it. The utmost prolongation of human life also, is in the like alternation of toil and rest. While the poor beast of burden, if doomed to continued service, drags out a miserable existence, and at length sinks under the premature exhaustion of his powers. What lustre, then, does the Sabbath cast upon the benevolence of its Author. What mercy, what God-breathed humanity appear in this holy Institution. Let those who dwell in the habitations of cruelty, be its enemies.

## SECTION V.

### MANNER OF OBSERVING THE SABBATH.

Notwithstanding God has given the Sabbath for the spiritual and temporal benefit of man, it is manifest that we may suffer a woful loss of all the good it proposes, if we neglect to make a proper improvement of it. Like all the other means of grace, it may prove a savor of death unto death to those who abuse

it. It therefore becomes a momentous inquiry, How shall this holy day be observed?

This great institution is to be regarded as a weekly testimony of our allegiance to Him who created us. It thus becomes the mark of distinction between the worshipers of Jehovah and heathens. This being the case, it becomes a matter of thrilling importance that the testimony of our allegiance be sincere, characterized by nothing of hypocrisy or formality. If, in all our acts of worship, we must be careful to worship "in spirit and in truth," surely it is of the highest importance to do so on this solemn occasion, when the Great King comes down to test our loyalty. Let it be remembered, too, that in this business there can properly be no uninterested spectators. It is not for a few to go through with the solemn act of dedicating themselves, while the rest make it a mere holiday, in which they look on, as boys witness the manouevrings of soldiers on parade day. But *all* the sons and daughters of Adam—for all are alike the workmanship of the Divine Being—are equally bound to direct their eyes and their hearts to Him who made them, and to say, "Come, let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

On this day we should by no means omit to celebrate the praise of creation. To be a memorial of this great work of the Almighty, the Sabbath was originally instituted. Shall we then lose sight of the original design of the institution, or even throw it into the shade as a matter of secondary importance? Is not the soundness of that system of theology to be suspected, which would teach us to do so? Some, it is true, teach us that the work of Redemption being much more stupendous than that of creation, is therefore to be made the chief object of our praise. But

however plausible this sentiment may seem, it is a sufficient answer to say it is not contained in the Scriptures. How much more vast the work of Redemption is than that of creation, we pretend not to say, as we are not able to measure the extent of either. To say which work makes the most powerful impression upon our minds, and fills us with more sublime ideas, is more easy. But that is no criterion by which to judge of their relative magnitude. Let it even be conceded that Redemption exceeds in glory the work of creation, still, whence do we *derive* those powers by which we estimate its glory? Whence did we obtain those faculties by which we contemplate the great scheme of Redemption, and know that it is glorious? Is it not to the wisdom and goodness of God as displayed in creation, that we are indebted for all these? And what are the *objects* upon which Redemption is accomplished? Are they not *created* objects? And what is the *effect* which redemption has upon them? Is it not that of putting an end to the disorders which sin has introduced, and bringing them to their original glory? Is not the final result of redemption to be that of bringing man back to that state of holiness and rectitude which the work of creation originally bestowed upon him? How then can the praise of Redemption be celebrated, without celebrating the praise of creation also? The one certainly leads directly to the other. So that if Redemption accomplish its proper fruits upon us, it will lead us to be still more devout in observing the proper memorial of the Creator's works.

But let it not be thought, because the work of creation holds so prominent a place in our Sabbath meditations, that redemption is therefore cast into the shade. It is rather the contrary. For as those powers by which we contemplate the work of creation,



and become acquainted with its grandeur and with its author, are impaired by sin, so it is impossible for us to enter into the subject profitably, except by the aid which Redemption affords. If we attempt to bring our mental powers to act upon the works of creation, and to "look through nature up to Nature's God," we shall find them slow and lifeless to perform their duty, until first purified and invigorated by the influence of the great Atonement. Much, therefore, as it is our duty to celebrate the praise of creation, we cannot do so to the glory of God, without recognizing at the same time the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, as the means by which we do it. From which it appears, that the praises of creation and of redemption go hand in hand in this matter. There is no clashing,—no contrariety,—nor even such an elevation of one above the other in respect to glory, that they cannot be celebrated together, and upon the very day which most fitly serves as the memorial of the former; which memorial cannot be transferred to another day without manifest incongruity.

It is manifest from the slightest consideration of the nature and design of the Sabbath institution, that Redemption cannot be excluded from our meditations on this holy day, but must hold a very prominent place. For one great design of the Sabbath is, to promote our conformity to holiness. But man partakes of no holiness except through the gospel. The mediation of Christ is the only channel through which it is communicated to him, and this always in connection with the most vigorous action of his mind on the subject.

Another very important thing among the duties of the Sabbath, is the cultivation of a right spirit with reference to it. We should "*count it a delight*," Isa. lviii. 13 Can that man be called a Christian, who

counts it an irksome season ? Is he spiritually minded to whom it is an unwelcome interruption of his worldly business, who in the avariciousness of his heart says "when will the Sabbath be gone that we may set forth wheat ?" Amos. viii. 5. Surely not. His temper is any thing but in accordance with the sacredness of the Sabbath season. His thoughts, his feelings are a direct violation of that law which says, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." To a real Christian, however, the Sabbath is the most delightful season he enjoys on earth. It is something like a heaven below ; for the things of God and Christ come then into direct contact with his holy soul. He is as eager for the approach of this holy season, as a child is for his holiday. Instead of it being too long for him, it is too short ; and with joy does he look forward to a Sabbath which shall never end, that which remaineth for the people of God, Heb. iv. 9. Such a spirit ought ever to be cultivated. In no other way can the Sabbath become a means of grace to the soul. What will mere abstinence from labor do ? It will only contribute to the renovation of the corporeal system ; which, it is true, is one design of the institution. But this is a small part. Shall we take care of the body, and not of the soul ! Yet the soul suffers unto death, if there be no care to cherish a right spirit with reference to the day which is "the holy of the Lord." Our very thoughts must be put under restraint, and the greatest care taken that nothing of a worldly nature intrude into the mind.

This leads us to observe, that our conversation should have no reference to worldly things, but should be upon such subjects as are spiritual and tend to the furtherance of the soul in the divine life. "Not speaking thine own words," Isa. lviii. 13. But, alas ! we shall enter the dwellings of some, and when

the Sabbath approaches, we shall not know it by any difference that we can discover in their conversation. It is still upon subjects that have not the remotest connection with the glory of God. Follow them to the place of public worship, and up to the very threshold of the door, their speech still savors of this world. Follow them through the whole of the day—the state of their crops, the currency of the country, the political aspect of things, banks, bonds, mortgages; these are the themes upon which they expatiate. These render them animated, and even eloquent. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Reader, thinkest thou that such persons can say in truth, “O how I love thy law.” That law says, Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Thinkest thou that the love of God reigns in their hearts? This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. John. v. 3.

All visiting for pleasure is inconsistent with a right observance of the Sabbath. Express and plain is the word of God—“Not finding thine own pleasure.” Isa. lxviii. 13. Visiting the sick for the purpose of alleviating their sufferings, and rendering what help we can, either as it regards their bodies or their souls, is not only allowable, but is a Sabbath duty. But even this is liable to abuse. Multitudes take the Sabbath to visit the sick, merely because they are not willing to take time on any other day; and it is to be feared that if there were no Sabbath, the sick would be sadly neglected by them. Others go merely because the rigid improvement of the day at home is irksome to them. They watch the occasion, and convert it as much as possible into a visit for their own pleasure, while they quiet their consciences by the reflection that they have been visiting the sick. Reader! be careful how you seek to evade the re-

straints of Heaven's law. Every attempt on your part to convert the season of holy rest into a day of pleasure, evinces a heart that counts the commandments of God grievous. Is this a *renewed* heart? Impossible. Remember, too, that while you visit others for your own pleasure, you drive them to a violation of the Sabbath, as well as yourself. You take them from their closet, their reading, their meditations.

All traveling, for business or for pleasure, is also forbidden by the Sabbath law. Such traveling as may be necessary in order to promote the due sanctification of the day, is of course not included. Harnessing our horses and riding to our accustomed places of worship, may be necessary to promote the sanctification of the Sabbath, and *&c.*, therefore, no breach of it. It stands on the same level with the labor performed by the priests of the Old Economy in the temple, for which they were "blameless." Matt. xii. 5. Yet traveling one half the distance for pleasure, is a profanation of the day, inasmuch as the word of God says, "not finding thine own pleasure." For the same reason, and because there are six days in which men ought to work, journeying for business on the Sabbath, is a violation of it. Take the following case: Brother A. is out on a journey. The Sabbath comes, and instead of putting up and resting until the sacred season is past, he keeps right forward just as he had done every other day of the week. True, he professes to regret the necessity of traveling on this day, but pleads in excuse that he cannot afford to stop at a public house during the time. He is too poor; or, he says, the tavern is a noisy, bustling place, and unfavorable to his religious enjoyment, and, therefore, he concludes it will be no greater violation of the Sabbath to proceed quietly on his journey than it would be to spend it in such a situation. But, bro-

ther, let me talk with you about this. How much would it cost you to stop at the public house? A dollar, or two dollars; or it may be, if your family is with you, five dollars. Well, will you barter away the sanctity of the Sabbath for five dollars! Poor as you are, will you make sale of the ordinance of God for money? For this is what you do in reality. Turn it and turn it whichever way you will, it comes at last to this. Pause, then, and consider whether, under such circumstances, and actuated by such principles, you can class yourself with those who "esteem the law of God better to them than thousands of gold and silver." Ps. cxix. 72. The true Christian would rather impoverish himself to the last farthing than violate one of God's precepts. "But the tavern was noisy and bustling." How came you to put up at such a tavern? Those who *remember* the Sabbath, and are anxious to spend it to the glory of God, will carefully look out and make their inquiries beforehand, and in most cases will not have much difficulty in lodging themselves at a quiet place. But if through circumstances beyond their own control, they are lodged in a place of different character, their duty is to submit to it, and do the best they can. Your enjoyment may not be so great; but what of that? Your spiritual prosperity does not always depend on your enjoyment; nor does God's glory depend upon it. God's glory depends upon your obedience to his law, and so does your prosperity. It is a mistaken notion that Christians are never in the way of duty but when they are in the way of enjoyment. Besides, dare you prescribe terms to the Almighty, and say you will obey him, provided he will grant you such enjoyments and privileges as you want, otherwise you will not? How daring the impiety! What if God lodged you at such a wicked place on purpose that you

might, by your conduct and your words, be a reproof to the ungodly sinners that frequented there. Will you be ashamed of your duty, and shrink from the trial? "He that is ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed." Luke ix. 26. Remember, my brother, God's law says, "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy." The exceptions which you make, God has not made.

After what has been offered, it seems almost needless to add, that Sabbath-keeping includes abstinence from labor. The Divine law enjoins us "to keep it holy." The plain meaning of which is, that it is a day peculiarly sacred to the Lord. For the word *holy*, when applied to things inanimate, or to portions of time, denotes them to be set apart exclusively for religious purposes. If, then, the day in question, according to the divine mandate, is to be kept holy, it is manifestly a sin to devote it, or any part of it, to secular pursuits. Wherefore the law is express—"in it thou shalt not do any work." All that work which on other days is perfectly lawful, is on the holy Sabbath to be laid aside, except such as may be absolutely necessary for the prevention of distress, or the relief of objects of mercy. But alas! what kind of commentary upon this law is the conduct of many who call themselves by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us see.—Neighbor B. has a large grass farm, and milks daily from thirty to fifty cows. The product of his dairy is cheese, of which he makes one or perhaps two each day during the proper season. The Sabbath comes, and the cows must be milked. Well, that is right and necessary for the prevention of distress. But then the milk must be subjected to the same operation as on other days, and the accustomed cheese must be made, because otherwise it would be lost. Lost!—well, suppose it should



be, how much is it worth? Why, five dollars, more or less. And so he barter away the sanctity of the Sabbath for *five dollars*! Well, Judas sold his master for thirty pieces of silver, and how much better is your conduct than his? Or what better is your conduct than mine would be in the following case? I have a valuable horse, which I will sell for one hundred dollars. A traveler passes my door on Sabbath day, and offers me my price. Now the times are hard, and by closing the bargain it will be a profit to me of twenty or twenty-five dollars. By refusing to do so, I lose the chance of selling him, and he remains on my hands. Rather than lose so good an opportunity, I strike the bargain, Sabbath though it be. Thus have I sold the sanctity of the Sabbath for twenty dollars! Neighbor B., who makes his cheese on the Sabbath, is horror-struck, and comes over to admonish me. But, "*Physician heal thyself.*"

We might multiply cases to illustrate our argument, but it is needless. Every instance of departure from God's law, we believe, will be found to have originated in selfishness. But that manner of keeping the day which looks at our own interest, rather than the honor of God, can in no way be called "keeping it holy." For if it is holy, it is consecrated to the Lord, not to ourselves. But in all the foregoing instances, it is manifest, the individual looks first to himself. Such selfishness is idolatry, and is the very spirit that governs the carnal mind. But God, in the just retributions of his providence, sometimes defeats the very end proposed to be obtained by it. For instance, the cheese, which is the product of Sabbath labor, spoils on the dairyman's hands; or if that does not take place, he fails of getting his pay for it. The farmer who was in haste to gather in his hay or his grain on the Sabbath for fear of a shower, has no sooner se-

cured it than the storm begins, and a single flash of lightning consumes the whole. Or, it may be, when winter comes, he takes it to market, trusts it out, and finally gets nothing for it. The man who could not afford the expense of stopping at the hotel over Sabbath while on his journey, gets home, and finds perhaps that on the very day he was profaning God's holy institution, some person's cattle broke into his grain-field and destroyed enough to pay for his lodging at the hotel half a dozen times. What then did he gain by it? That such retributions overtake those who violate the law of God, is not merely imaginary. On the contrary, it is believed, that were men more close observers of the dealings of Providence, they would be sensible that such things take place often. But, alas! "God speaketh once, yea, twice, and man perceiveth it not."

It seems almost superfluous to say any thing about public worship, as an important part of Sabbath exercises. If it were necessary to their spiritual prosperity that Jews should meet together in "holy convocation," Lev. xxii. 3, and be instructed in the testimonies concerning a Messiah to come, it cannot be less important that Christians should now assemble and celebrate the fulfilment of those testimonies, and "the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ." Our Lord has ordained public worship to be a means of promoting the growth of his people in holiness; and if the Sabbath is a means to the same end, they ought both to go together, unless our situation render it impossible. If on the holy Sabbath we cannot say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts," when can we? If on this holy day we cannot say, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness," when will it ever be the language of our hearts?

But we cannot enlarge. Our essay has already exceeded the limits we had designed. We submit the subject to your consideration, as being one of incalculable importance. Reader, what course will you take? God Almighty has separated one day in particular from all others, and pronounced it holy. Will you then say that all days are alike? Or will you assume to yourself the prerogative of setting apart whatever portion of time you choose, in open disregard of that particular portion which God "sanctified and blessed," saying, "it is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God?" Will you suffer your convenience or your selfishness to come into conflict with the claims of your Maker? Who is it that said, "If any man will come after me, let him DENY himself?" Pause then, before you suffer yourself to be lulled into indifference on this matter. A vain sophistry insinuates that it is a subject of minor importance—a *non-essential*. But be not deceived. God has magnified its importance throughout his holy oracles. It is God the Lord that speaks, will you obey or will you turn again to folly?

## THE SIXTH-DAY NIGHT.

“ Sweet to the soul the parting ray,  
Which ushers placid evening in,  
When with the still expiring day,  
The Sabbath’s peaceful hours begin ;  
How grateful to the anxious breast,  
The sacred hours of holy rest !

I love the blush of vernal bloom,  
When morning gilds night’s sullen tear :  
And dear to me the mournful gloom  
Of Autumn—Sabbath of the year ;  
But purer pleasures, joys sublime,  
Await the dawn of holy time.

Hushed is the tumult of the day,  
And worldly cares, and business cease,  
• While soft the vesper breezes play  
To hymn the glad return of peace ;  
O season blest ! O moments given,  
To turn the vagrant thoughts to Heaven.

What though involved in lurid sight,  
The loveliest forms in nature fade,  
Yet mid the gloom shall heavenly light  
With joy the contrite heart pervade ;  
O thou, great source of light divine,  
With beams etherial gladden mine.

Oft as this hallowed hour shall come,  
O raise my thoughts from earthly things,  
And bear them to my heavenly home,  
On living faith’s immortal wings—  
Till the last gleam of life decay  
In one eternal Sabbath Day !”